

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS OR ECONOMIC ENEMIES? CHINA'S IMPACT ON  
U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS IN WEST AFRICA

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army  
Command and General Staff College in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE  
Strategic Studies

by

JOHN W. HOECK, LIEUTENANT COMMANDER, U.S. NAVY RESERVE  
B.S., U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, 2002

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas  
2017

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<b>REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE</b>				<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. <b>PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</b>					
<b>1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY)</b> 09-06-2017		<b>2. REPORT TYPE</b> Master's Thesis		<b>3. DATES COVERED (From - To)</b> AUG 2016 – JUNE 2017	
<b>4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE</b>  Partners in Progress or Economic Enemies? China's Impact on U.S. National Interests in West Africa				<b>5a. CONTRACT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5b. GRANT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER</b>	
<b>6. AUTHOR(S)</b>  John W. Hoeck, Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy Reserve				<b>5d. PROJECT NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5e. TASK NUMBER</b>	
				<b>5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER</b>	
<b>7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b> U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				<b>8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER</b>	
<b>9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)</b>				<b>10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)</b>	
				<b>11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)</b>	
<b>12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT</b> Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
<b>13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES</b>					
<b>14. ABSTRACT</b> The dramatic growth of China's economy in this century has led to its ability to project power, both economic and military, beyond its borders in ways not seen in centuries. One region where the Chinese government has focused this power is West Africa, specifically through economic investment. Is China using this investment to exert greater "soft power" in the region, and convince those governments to support China on the global stage? Does this investment and influence come at the expense of U.S. interests, or can they coincide? What are the U.S. national interests in West Africa? Can Chinese and U.S. interests serve to better the lives of the population in the region, or will they be exploited by the competing ideologies? This thesis will explore these questions to support or challenge the position that a rise in Chinese influence in West Africa poses a threat to U.S. national interests.					
<b>15. SUBJECT TERMS</b> China, West Africa, Economic Investment, United States, Chinese Influence					
<b>16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:</b>			<b>17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT</b>  (U)	<b>18. NUMBER OF PAGES</b>  69	<b>19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON</b>
<b>a. REPORT</b> (U)	<b>b. ABSTRACT</b> (U)	<b>c. THIS PAGE</b> (U)			<b>19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)</b>

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: LCDR John W. Hoeck

Thesis Title: Partners in Progress or Economic Enemies? China's Impact on U.S.  
National Interests in West Africa

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Thesis Committee Chair  
Jack D. Kem, Ph.D.

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
Michael Burke, M.Ed.

\_\_\_\_\_, Member  
CDR John Courtright, M.A.

Accepted this 9th day of June 2017 by:

\_\_\_\_\_, Director, Graduate Degree Programs  
Prisco R. Hernandez, Ph.D.

The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

PARTNERS IN PROGRESS OR ECONOMIC ENEMIES? CHINA'S IMPACT ON U.S. NATIONAL INTERESTS IN WEST AFRICA, by Lieutenant Commander John W. Hoeck, 69 pages.

The dramatic growth of China's economy in this century has led to its ability to project power, both economic and military, beyond its borders in ways not seen in centuries. One region where the Chinese Government has focused this power is West Africa, specifically through economic investment. Is China using this investment to exert greater "soft power" in the region, and convince those governments to support China on the global stage? Does this investment and influence come at the expense of U.S. interests, or can they coincide? What are the U.S. national interests in West Africa? Can Chinese and American interests serve to better the lives of the population in the region, or will they be exploited by the competing ideologies? This thesis will explore these questions to support or challenge the position that a rise in Chinese influence in West Africa poses a threat to U.S. national interests.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis committee at the Command and General Staff College: Dr. Jack Kem, Mr. Michael Burke, and CDR John Courtright for all their assistance, guidance, and advice with the completion of this thesis. You have made me a better researcher and a far better writer through your dedication to excellence and always challenging me to dig a little deeper with my analysis.

This whole process would have been much more difficult without the support of my amazing girlfriend Nicole Austad, who was always there for the frustrated phone calls and exasperated text messages. Thank you for the love and understanding you give me every day.

Above all, none of this would be possible without the two greatest parents any man could ask for, Wayne and Sue Hoeck. Thank you for instilling in me a love of reading and learning early in life, always pushing me to do my best, and not allowing me to be content with 'just good enough.' Thank you for the sacrifices you made for me, Wes, and Ash, and the love and support you still provide to all of us.

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## ACRONYMS

AGOA	African Growth and Opportunity Act
CDB	China Development Bank
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ExIm	Export-Import Bank of China
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOCAC	Forum on China Africa Cooperation
MOC	Ministry of Commerce
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRC	People's Republic of China
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
UN	United Nations
USAFRICOM	U.S. African Command
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union



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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

China is now a powerful force in Africa, and the Chinese are not going away. Their embrace of the continent is strategic, planned, long-term, and still unfolding.

— Deborah Brautigam, *The Dragon's Gift*

#### Overview

The dramatic growth of China's economy in this century has led to its ability to project power, both economic and military, beyond its borders in ways not seen in centuries. One region where the Chinese Government has focused this power is West Africa, specifically through economic investment. West Africa presents a unique opportunity for both China and the U.S. as it contains abundant natural resources and relative political stability after decades of military coups and civil wars. In his 2015 Posture Statement to the U.S. Congress, the commander of U.S. African Command (USAFRICOM) General David Rodriguez noted "Africa's role in the global economic system is expanding: the continent is surrounded by international shipping lanes . . . is rich in natural resources and the human capital represented by a large youth population" (Rodriguez 2015, 1). Is China using this investment to exert greater "soft power" in the region, and convince those governments to support China on the global stage? Does this investment and influence come at the expense of U.S. interests, or can they coincide? What are the U.S. national interests in West Africa? Can Chinese and U.S. interests serve to better the lives of the population in the region, or will they be exploited by the competing ideologies? This thesis will explore these questions to support or challenge the

position that a rise in Chinese influence in West Africa poses a threat to U.S. national interests.

### Primary Research Question

As China's economy has enjoyed tremendous growth in the 21st century, the United States has not enjoyed the same benefit, which has resulted in reductions in government spending. In this increasingly fiscally restrained environment, the U.S. and its Department of Defense can no longer afford to devote unlimited spending and resources to all areas of the globe. The U.S. must look for regions where our attention and investment can have the most impact, as well as areas where our government can find common ground and cooperate with other nations to their mutual benefit. This thesis will examine if the region of West Africa should be a priority for the American Government. Determining whether there is a threat to U.S. interests in West Africa that would increase the region's priority is the purpose of the primary research question "does the rise in Chinese influence in West Africa through economic investment pose a threat to U.S. national interests."

### Secondary Research Questions

To properly answer the primary research question, "Does the rise of Chinese influence in West Africa through economic investment pose a threat to U.S. national interests?" it is necessary to examine several secondary questions. This thesis will look at each of these questions to properly frame the issues present in American and Chinese involvement in West Africa. The secondary research questions to be answered are as follows:

1. What are U.S. national interests in West Africa?
2. Can China and the U.S. work together in the region to their mutual benefit?
3. Does a rise in Chinese influence necessarily mean a decrease in U.S. influence?
4. What is economic aid and investment, and do the U.S. and Chinese Governments view it differently?
5. Does Chinese investment in the region improve the lives of local people, or is it merely exploitative?

These secondary research questions allow for a deeper investigation and understanding of American and Chinese involvement in West Africa. The integration of the answers to these questions will create the answer to the primary research question. The answers to the secondary research question will be assessed using specific evaluation criteria, and the answer to the primary research question will be utilized for conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Before this thesis can propose an answer as to whether there is a risk to U.S. national interests in West Africa, it is necessary to determine what the national interests in the region are. Examining both the *U.S. National Security Strategy* and the *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, as well as the posture statements from the commanders of U.S. Africa Command will provide the necessary background for determining these interests.

Once the U.S. national interests have been determined, this thesis must then determine Chinese interests in West Africa. By evaluating which countries, industries, and infrastructure Chinese corporations and government entities are focusing on, and

examining the statements made by Chinese officials and ministries, comparisons can be made to the U.S. interests determined from the preceding question. Areas where U.S. and Chinese interests overlap will be highlighted to demonstrate opportunities where both nations could cooperate for mutual gain.

By determining both nations' interests in West Africa, an examination can be made of the nations in the region that receive investment and aid from both nations. Does the amount of investment from a nation directly correlate with increased influence? If one nation increases its influence, does that result in the decline of influence by the other nation? Understanding whether influence in West African nations is a "zero-sum game" will assist in determining the level of risk posed to either nation based on the action of the other.

In light of the investments made and assistance given in West Africa, it is critical to understand how both the Chinese and U.S. Governments (USG) define that assistance. Is there an international standard for what constitutes economic aid versus economic investment? Do both the U.S. and China present aid and investment the same way in West Africa? Is one approach more effective than the other is? By examining the methods each government exercises to promote development in the region, a comparison of each nation's efforts can be made to determine if one is more effective than the other is, or produces greater benefits for the receiving nations. This will set the conditions for the last of the secondary research questions.

Finally, this thesis will examine the effect of Chinese investment on the population of West Africa to determine if there are tangible benefits to the local people. This will reinforce the earlier analysis of U.S. national interests in the region and their

compatibility with Chinese interests. These effects will also highlight areas of opportunity for greater U.S. influence by improving the lives of local populations that are potentially being exploited.

### Definitions and Terms

The following definitions are provided to assist the reader with understanding several key terms and concepts that will be utilized throughout this thesis. The source of each definition is provided, and will remain consistent throughout the thesis.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines Official Development Assistance (ODA) as financing provided to developing nations by official government agencies specifically targeted towards development and poverty reduction. This financing must have a grant element of at least 25 percent (OECD 2016a).

The OECD defines Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) as an investment that has an object of creating a lasting interest by an enterprise or investor in one economy in an enterprise that is resident in an economy different from that of the investor. The investor must also own at least 10 percent of the voting power of in the new enterprise (OECD 2016b, 7-8).

### Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations and delimitations are factors that constrain the breadth of research for this thesis. Limitations are external factors while delimitations are self-imposed for the purpose of this research. The primary limitation is that the demands of Command and General Staff College prevent the researcher from travelling to West Africa to conduct research or survey the local population on their views and attitudes towards the U.S. and

China. Due to this limitation, there will be no human factors research conducted for this thesis.

China has a long history of diplomatic and economic engagement on the African continent going back to the 1950s. However, this thesis will focus only on Chinese involvement since the turn of the 21st century, when the massive expansion of the Chinese economy allowed the nation to begin exerting far more influence outside its borders. This thesis is specifically focused on the United Nations defined sub region of West Africa, and will not address Chinese activity elsewhere on the African continent. All research will be conducted using published materials in English, as the researcher does not possess a fluency in Chinese or any West African language that allows the necessary ability to properly translate text. All research materials will be open source documents; no classified material will be reviewed or used for the purpose of this thesis.

During the research and writing of this thesis, the presidential administration of the U.S. changed from President Barack Obama to President Donald Trump. As with all changes of administration, this will bring significant changes to personnel and policies. For that reason, only government documents and policies that were in place on January 31, 2017 are used in the research of this thesis. Any changes to strategic policy or diplomatic focus made by the new administration after that date will not be included.

This thesis is written to assist with the discussion concerning Army Warfighting Challenge #2: Shape the Security Environment. According to the Army Capabilities Integration Center (ARCIC), Army Warfighting Challenge #2 is defined as “how does the Army influence the security environment and engage key actors and local/regional forces in order to consolidate gains and achieve sustainable security outcomes in support

of Geographic Combatant Commands and Joint requirements” (Army Capabilities Integration Center 2017).

All monetary figures in this thesis will be in United States dollars unless otherwise specified. These denominations have been pulled directly from primary sources, and the researcher has not applied any exchange rates to change from one currency to another. Any monetary figure that not represented by U.S. dollars will be specifically listed as such.

### Chapter Conclusion

The following chapter, chapter 2, will be a literature review to determine the current information that has been published on the following secondary research questions.

1. What are the U.S. national interests in West Africa?
2. Can China and the U.S. work together in the region to their mutual benefit?
3. Does a rise in Chinese influence necessarily mean a decrease in U.S. influence?
4. What is economic aid and investment, and do the U.S. and Chinese governments view it differently?
5. Does Chinese investment in the region improve the lives of local people, or is it merely exploitative?

By reviewing the current literature on these questions, we can determine the assumptions that have been made, as well as the gaps in the current body of knowledge. This thesis will then attempt to fill that gap through an analysis of the above questions to



answer the primary research question “Does the rise in Chinese influence in West Africa through economic investment pose a risk to U.S. national interests?”

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Chapter Introduction

Answering the primary research question, “Does the rise of Chinese influence in West Africa through economic investment pose a risk to U.S. national interests?” requires a review of the current literature concerning the subject. The literature review will provide information concerning the secondary research questions, the analysis of which in chapter 4 will result in the answer to the primary research question. This chapter will organize the review according to the secondary research questions, providing the information associated with each in sequential order.

#### Overview of West Africa

Before addressing the secondary research questions, this thesis will provide an overview of West Africa to acquaint the reader with the region. West Africa is a UN defined sub region consisting of 17 nations: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote D’Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. Prior to European colonization, West Africa was home to several large empires, including the Ghana, Mali, and Songhay empires which ruled over large parts of the current region between 1000 and 1600 A.D. These empires maintained trade networks between West Africa and the North African states along the Mediterranean, which aided in the spread of Islam into the region (Davidson, Buah, and Ajayi 1965, 34-54).

European colonization began in the late 15th century with the Portuguese, who discovered and then established settlements on the islands of Cape Verde. Over the next 300 years, the French, Spanish, Dutch, and English would also establish small settlements along the coastline of West Africa to support trade with the interior, especially in slaves. However, it would not be until the late 19th century, following the Berlin Conference of 1884 that the “Scramble for Africa” would begin in earnest and see the expansion of European colonization progress into the interior regions of West Africa. Most of the region (the present day countries of Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Benin, Guinea, Cote D’Ivoire, and Niger) came under French administration (Ali-Dinar 2017). The Portuguese maintained colonies in Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, and Guinea Bissau, their only mainland colony in the region. The British became the other major colonial power in West Africa, with colonies in The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and taking over the German colony in Togo following World War I. Only Liberia, which was initially settled as a home for former American slaves in 1822, remained independent as she had since declaring herself a republic in 1847. This may have been due to European nations viewing her as a de-facto American colony in all but name. Following World War II, the old colonial empires began to collapse around the world. West African independence began with Ghana in 1957, and over the next decade the remaining colonies also shed their colonial titles (Central Intelligence Agency 2017).

Following independence, there was a period of strong economic growth throughout West Africa, especially within the former British colonies which had been granted greater local autonomy late in the colonial era. However, this early era of hope was followed by widespread violence as military coups and civil wars broke out across

the region in the 1980s and 1990s, and continuing into the new century. Civil wars in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote D'Ivoire, and Guinea Bissau created millions of refugees and cost hundreds of thousands of lives, in addition to destroying the economies of the affected nations. Even in nations that avoided full civil war, small scale insurgencies have flared, often caused by the same issues that sparked the larger conflicts. Poor governance, corruption, ethnic tensions, and widespread proliferation of weapons throughout the region. These insurgencies have also been exploited by international terrorist groups, with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM) in Mali, Mauritania, and Niger; and the violent attacks of Boko Haram in Nigeria (Annan 2014).

Significant progress has been made in the last decade however, as UN and African Union backed ceasefires have ended the civil wars in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote D'Ivoire, and free elections have taken place across the region. Nations such as Senegal and Ghana, which have avoided large scale civil strife and held multiple, peaceful transitions of power serve as both leaders and examples for the rest of the region. Even Liberia has held two peaceful elections in 2005 and 2011, and is poised for a potential peaceful transition from the government of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in 2017.

#### U.S. National Interests in West Africa

To determine if there is a risk to U.S. national interests in West Africa, it is critical to determine first what those interests are. To accomplish this we have three documents that lay out the groundwork for American policy in the region: the 2015 *U.S. National Security Strategy* (NSS), the 2012 *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, and the 2016 *U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM) Posture Statement*.

Perhaps the clearest statement on American interests in West Africa comes from the *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* which defines the U.S. core interests as “promoting democratic states that are economically vibrant...; expanding opportunities for U.S. trade and investment; preventing conflict and mass atrocities; and fostering broad-based, sustainable economic growth and poverty alleviation” (Obama 2012, 2). By promoting stability and security in the region, the U.S. can prevent the spread of extremism and open markets for American goods. As will be shown with the Chinese, the U.S. also understands that a primary way to accomplish these goals is through economic investment. The 2015 NSS contains an entire section entitled “Invest in Africa’s Future,” which details programs centered on increasing access to electrical power, promoting trade and dialogue between American and African corporations and lay the groundwork for increased private investment in local economies. It also discusses programs designed to develop African exports to grow national economies, and perhaps most importantly create ties with young African leaders in government and business who can advance U.S.-African relations throughout the coming decades (Obama 2015, 27).

Since the turn of the century, the U.S. has made significant steps to increase its trade and investment in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), and West Africa specifically. In 2000, the U.S. Congress passed the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) which offered “trade preferences and other economic benefits to SSA countries that meet certain criteria, including progress toward a market economy, respect for the rule of law, and human and worker rights” (Jones and Williams 2012, 1). All 17 West African nations are currently eligible for AGOA benefits. In his final speech to African leaders in September 2016, President Barack Obama touted AGOA’s effectiveness by stating, “American

investment in Africa is up 70 percent. US exports to Africa have surged...In the two years since our last forum, American and African companies have concluded deals worth nearly \$15 billion” (Thomas 2016, 1). The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) also located one of its three regional Trade and Investment Hubs on the continent in Accra, Ghana. This hub has satellite offices in Senegal, Cote d’Ivoire, and Burkina Faso to “increase the value and volume of West Africa’s exports by addressing challenges in intra-regional and export orientated agricultural and value-added trade” (USAID 2016).

None of these investments will be effective however without internal stability and security within the nations of West Africa. To that end, the U.S. is working to improve the abilities of African nations to maintain their military and government institutions through the Security Governance Initiative (SGI). General David Rodriguez, the former commander of USAFRICOM defined the SGI as “a collective approach to strengthen African partners’ security institutions’ capacity to protect civilians and confront challenges, with integrity and accountability” (Rodriguez 2016, 16). Of the six primary nations involved with the SGI, four (Mali, Ghana, Niger, and Nigeria) are located within West Africa. USAFRICOM has also worked to improve the maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, an area with significant resources and economic potential, by leveraging regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States to produce multinational agreements such as the Yaounde Code of Conduct. These agreements create the foundation for eliminating piracy and illegal trafficking in the Gulf that inhibits economic development in the area (Rodriguez 2016, 10).

In his introduction of the *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* President Barack Obama stated “America believes in Africa as a region of growing opportunity and promise, for Africa, for America, and for our people and our economies. We believe Africa can be the world’s next major economic success story” (Obama 2012, i). The U.S. has clearly shown that it has significant national interests in West Africa, and is willing to invest diplomatic, economic, and military effort to advance them.

### American and Chinese Cooperation in West Africa

It has been determined that the U.S. has significant national interests in West Africa, but how do those interests interact with Chinese interests in the region. Is there room for both nations to advance their interest, perhaps even through cooperation?

The oldest national interest that China has in West Africa is the drive for international recognition of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) instead of Taiwan, or what is also known as the “One China” policy. This was clearly delineated in China’s African Policy that was published after the 2006 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, which stated the “One-China principle is the political foundation for the establishment and development of China’s relations with African countries and regional organizations” (FOCAC 2006, 3). This policy has been effective in almost eliminating Taiwanese diplomatic presence in Africa, as of 2013 45 of 48 sub-Saharan African nations, and 16 of the 18 nations in West Africa, had established diplomatic ties to the PRC in line with the “One China” policy (Sun 2014b, 5).

China’s 2006 African Policy lays out the Chinese view of their interests and objectives in Africa. As stated above, the entire policy is based on the requirement that nations sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan and only recognize the PRC. Once that has

occurred, the Chinese view their interests as mutually benefitting both themselves and their African partners. China is focused on improving trade, investment, infrastructure development, debt reduction, cooperation in medical, technology, and science, cultural exchanges, peace and security enhancement, and judicial and police cooperation. Another significant interest is cooperation in international affairs, promoting exchanges between governments, and working with African nations to advance their mutual interests through the United Nations (UN) (FOCAC 2006, 2-8). This push for cooperation in international affairs is significant, as China sees it as a way to gain greater leverage on the world stage. Yun Sun, a visiting fellow with the John L. Thornton China Center and the Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institute states that this leverage is critical as “[t]oday, on issues ranging from human rights to UN reform, from regional security to China’s core national interests, China looks to Africa to be on its side” (Sun 2014b, 5).

So where can the U.S. and China find common ground? As shown in their Africa Policy, China is concerned with improving local infrastructure, regional security, improving police and judicial structures, as well as developing local African economies and reducing human suffering through improved medical facilities and disaster reduction and relief. All of these interests are in line with the U.S. interests designated in the NSS, *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, and the *USAFRICOM Posture Statement* as shown above. China was responsible for building a new patrol vessel for the Nigerian Navy that is more capable than existing platforms. Rear Admiral Jacob Ajani of the Nigerian Navy stated the Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) Unity “would strengthen the efforts against all maritime crimes and illegalities in the nation’s territorial waters and the Gulf of Guinea in general . . . areas hitherto that were unable to be covered by other NN ships



will now be covered by NNS Unity” (Ayandele 2016, 1). This directly corresponds with USAFRICOM’s efforts to improve maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea to improve trade and stability in West Africa as noted above.

China has also given significant aid to improve infrastructure in several West African nations. In September 2016, the PRC and Liberia negotiated a \$50 million loan to expand and upgrade Roberts International Airport (RIA), the nation’s main airport. Boima S. Kamara, the Liberian Finance and Development Planning Minister stated in a press release that “the rehabilitation of the RIA as key to Liberia’s economic transformation, thus leading to an increase in the airport’s capacity to serve more flights, passengers, reinvigorate the economy and grow tourism” (Garblah 2016, 1). Even when the Chinese are not directly providing aid, their corporations are investing in local infrastructure. In 2006 the China Railway Construction Corporation (CRCC) and the government of Nigeria “signed an \$8.3 billion contract to rebuild the 2,733 km colonial-era railway between the coastal city of Lagos and the capital of northern Nigeria, Kano” (Brautigam 2009, 162-3).

While the U.S. has not specifically identified infrastructure development as one of its key interests in West Africa, Chinese investment in improving it could have significant benefits for local governments and economies, both of which are very important to American interests. The U.S. could work with China both in areas where their interests directly overlap and others where there may be second and third order benefits to their mutual benefit, especially in light of China’s unique experience of her own recent rapid development. “The deals they offer Africa are based on similar deals Japan and the West offered China decades ago, and which the post-Mao Chinese

accepted in the belief that they could also win from an approach that was not about aid, but business” (Brautigam 2009, 308).

### Is African Influence a Zero Sum Game?

After reviewing where the U.S. and China can work together on mutual interests, it is important to determine whether the areas where the two nations cannot find common ground are critical to U.S. interests. Specifically, does an increase in Chinese influence necessarily mean a decrease in U.S. influence?

China has provided several West African nations with significant economic aid and investment. As noted above, China has provided loans to Ghana to improve the nation’s main airport, as well as other pieces of infrastructure. China has also financed infrastructure development in Nigeria, as noted above, as well as providing direct currency loans to the Nigerian government, such as the recent \$6 billion loan that allowed Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari to maintain his nation’s currency at an artificially stronger level (Ajasa 2016). However, looking at a Pew Research poll, while these investments have certainly aided in West African support for China, they have not had a proportionally negative affect on West African views of the U.S.

The spring 2015 poll included three West African nations: Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal. The percentage of respondents that held a favorable view of China were 70 percent in Nigeria and Senegal, and 80 percent in Ghana. However, when asked about their views of the U.S., respondents from those nations were also overwhelmingly positive. Nigerian respondents held a 76 percent favorable rating, Senegal was 80 percent, and Ghana held the second strongest favorable rating of any polled nation in the world, at 89 percent (Wike, Stokes, and Poushter 2015a).

### Differences in Economic Aid and Investment

In reviewing economic aid and investment between the U.S. and China, it is necessary to determine how each nation defines or views those two programs. Differences between the two nations may cause misunderstandings on the part of their governments and scholars when attempting to understand the motivations and actions of the other in West Africa.

The United States follows the traditional Western approach to foreign aid and investment in line with the conventions of the Bretton Woods organizations: the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Official Developmental Assistance (ODA) is provided along the requirements of the OECD, with most aid being focused on health, education, and basic human needs. Following World War II, most U.S. foreign aid focused on economic development, growth, and rebuilding shattered economies because of that conflict. However, as the Cold War continued, that focus began to shift to the priorities listed above. This was done to avert Communist uprisings in poor rural areas as seen in Vietnam. The force behind this was the New Directions legislation of 1973, “an act requiring the country’s official aid to change emphasis from growth to poverty and basic human needs” (Brautigam 2009, 28).

Over 40 years later, U.S. aid to West Africa continues to follow this same pattern. According to data from the U.S. Government (USG), in 2010 the six largest recipient countries of U.S. aid in West Africa (Cote D’Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal) received a total of \$1.32 billion. Of that total, \$832.6 million (63 percent) was provided for health services, \$93.27 million (7 percent) for education, and only \$20.92 million (1.6 percent) was provided for infrastructure construction and development. In

2016, those six countries still received the highest amount of aid in West Africa; however, that total had decreased to \$1.08 billion. Of this amount, health services received \$716.69 million (66.4 percent), education \$88.24 million (8.2 percent), and not a single dollar was earmarked for infrastructure in any of the six countries. (United States Government 2017).

U.S. investment in Africa has centered on the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) of 2000, which has been continually renewed by both Republican and Democratic Congresses ever since. This act was designed to give preferential treatment to African imports from nations that met certain requirements in line with U.S interests in Africa as listed above, and promote investment in sub-Saharan Africa by U.S. businesses. Since its inception, the vast majority of eligible imports have been in oil and mineral fuels, but several amendments to the act have helped to increase volume of non-oil products such as textiles and clothing apparel (Jones and Williams 2012, 20-26). FDI from the U.S. in Africa has increased significantly, growing from \$28.16 billion in 2006 to \$64.04 billion in 2015, although the majority of that investment is also focused on mining and mineral/oil extraction (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2016a).

The USG's desire to place requirements or prerequisites on its aid and investment is in line with its strategic objectives of strong democratic institutions, economic growth, and promoting opportunity and development as laid out in the U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa (Obama 2012, 2). By focusing aid toward nations that take action to support American objectives, the USG hopes to entice foreign governments in West Africa to support U.S. interests through their domestic policies. These objectives can also lead to an increase in FDI from other nations, as noted by economists John Anyanwu and

Nadege Yameogo. In their study of FDI in West Africa, Anyanwu and Yameogo noted that trade openness and political stability positively affected the inflow of FDI. West African nations that have improved their trade partnerships have seen significant increases in FDI as “exporting more implies more market opportunities for the countries and in turn investors have a good signal that they can invest in the countries and get more economic returns” (Anyanwu and Yameogo 2015, 210). President Obama, in his final address to the U.S.-Africa Business Forum echoed this assessment while extoling opportunities for greater trade. “Graft, cronyism, corruption – it stifles growth, scares off investment . . . [t]he truth is, is that those governments that are above-board and transparent, people want to do business there” (Thomas 2016).

In an address to university students in Senegal in 2012, former U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told the audience that in contrast to other nations “America will stand up for democracy and universal human rights even when it might be easier to look the other way and keep the resources flowing” (Smith 2012). This opinion is shared by many Western nations, that Chinese aid and investment in West Africa have a different focus and definition than that given by members of the OECD, which China is not. A Congressional Research Service report in 2009 report highlighted many of these differences, stating “China appears to administer foreign aid in an ad hoc fashion, without a centralized system, foreign aid agency and mission, or regularized funding schedule. Nor does Beijing publicly release foreign aid data” (Lum 2009, 1). The report further illustrated the difference between OECD nations and China by pointing out that Chinese economic assistance is not aid in the sense that it is being used to further the development of China itself. This is accomplished by requiring materials or technology associated with

the assistance to come from China, as well as increasing the export of raw materials to China by allowing recipient countries to repay loans with oil, lumber, or other minerals that China required to power her economic growth. (Lum 2009, 2).

China sees the issue differently, as a nation that is still developing and until just a couple decades ago a recipient of major foreign assistance. Rather than blindly follow the example of Western nations, China has taken the lessons learned from her own experience as an aid recipient, and combined them with the lessons learned from the foreign aid programs it conducted with Africa in the 1970s and 1980s following the end of the Maoist regime. As noted by author Deborah Brautigam, in the mid-1990s “a clear mandate came down to the Ministry of Commerce from China’s State Council: *combine aid to Africa, mutual cooperation, and trade together*” (Brautigam 2009, 80). During a state visit to several African nations, Chinese Premier Li Peng stated that this mandate meant “China’s basic policy of providing aid to Africa has not changed [but]...China’s policy as moved from aid donation to economic cooperation for mutual benefit” (Brautigam 2009, 83).

The impact of this view is that China is far more willing to provide assistance for services or in sectors that Western nations choose not to focus on. In a Center for Global Development report on the Export Import Bank of China (ExIm), the researchers Todd Moss and Sarah Rose noted how ExIm lending does not come with the political, environmental, or human rights requirements that many, if not most Western nations attach to their funding offers. They also noted that ExIm focuses on areas of opportunity left open by the West. “Chinese companies and banks are investing heavily in physical infrastructure, a sector with high demand that most donors have neglected in Africa in

favor of education and health” (Moss and Rose 2006, 2). By providing economic assistance for infrastructure development, China also finds another area to further its own economic development. As Yun Sun notes,

China’s capital flows into Africa also create business opportunities for Chinese service contractors, such as construction companies...[i]n exchange for most Chinese financial aid to Africa, Beijing requires that infrastructure construction and other contracts favor Chinese service providers: 70 percent of them go to ‘approved,’ mostly state-owned, Chinese companies. (Sun 2014a)

#### Chinese Investment: Improving lives or exploiting them?

As stated above, U.S. national interests in West Africa center on promoting economic growth and poverty reduction to create stable, democratic nations. This is the foundation of U.S. investment in the region, and the reason that the U.S. places pre-conditions on its aid packages. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) requires recipient nations to “meet certain criteria, including progress towards a market economy, respect for the rule of law, and human and worker rights” (Jones and Williams 2012, 1). However, this does not mean that the Chinese follow the same rules.

One of the major concerns of Western nations and investors in West Africa is that China does not place the same conditions on investment that U.S. and other Western European donors do. According to a 2009 Congressional Research Service report on Chinese economic assistance, “U.S. policy makers and others have expressed frustration that China’s policy of providing economic assistance ‘without conditions’ has undermined the ability of other donors to influence the behaviors of aid recipients” (Lum 2009, 1). The Chinese do not deny this policy, as they consider such conditions to be meddling in the internal affairs of other nations. In China’s Africa Policy of 2006, a clear statement is made that the “Communist Party of China (CPC) develops exchanges of

various forms with friendly political parties and organizations of African countries on the basis of the principles of independence, equality, mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs" (FOCAC 2006, 3).

This quality of non-interference and few, if any, strings attached to aid has made China a very attractive trade and investment partner in Africa. As the then President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade wrote in a 2008 op-ed to *Financial Times*,

I have found that a contract that would take five years to discuss, negotiate and sign with the World Bank takes three months when we have dealt with Chinese authorities. I am a firm believer in good governance and the rule of law. But when bureaucracy and senseless red tape impede our ability to act – and when poverty persists while international functionaries drag their feet – African leaders have an obligation to opt for swifter solutions. (Wade 2008)

This ease of negotiation has helped elevate China to becoming the largest financier of infrastructure projects in Africa. According to a report from the World Bank published in 2009, Chinese infrastructure investment grew from \$474 million in 2001 to \$4.49 billion in 2007. The majority of this investment was split between electric power generation and transport (especially railroad), with the remaining funds going towards telecom and general infrastructure projects (Foster et al. 2009, 19). This investment in infrastructure has had measurable effects on economic growth in Africa. According to a study undertaken by researchers with AidData, the impact of over 3000 Chinese funded projects across 47 African nations from 2000-2012 was studied by looking at the increase in nighttime light over the continent. The researchers discovered that “a 10 percent increase in Chinese development finance corresponds to an 0.6-1.1 percent increase in per capita nighttime light output – and a 0.2-0.3 percent rise in regional GDP. China is quite literally lighting up Africa” (Parks et al. 2016). This data differs from another AidData working paper in 2015 which examined nighttime light data and aid from the



World Bank, and concluded “that there is no robust evidence showing that aid increases growth” (Dreher and Lohmann 2015, 6).

The benefits of Chinese financing and assistance do not come without concerns. In the same research that documented the increase in nighttime light data from Chinese investment, there was also a disturbing trend of where the increase in light was coming from. Writing an article for the Washington Post, the researchers noted that their results “indicate that the average African leader’s birth region receives roughly three times as much (195 percent more) financial support from China during the leader’s time in power” (Parks et al. 2016). This may be due in large part to the way in which China determines how to finance projects. In keeping with their policy of non-interference with other countries internal affairs, China does not determine aid based on what Beijing believes the recipient nation needs. According to the AidData researchers, “[d]uring our own interviews at China’s Ministry of Commerce, which is China’s lead aid agency, ministry officials emphasized that ‘the initiative generally comes from the recipient side’” (Dreher et al. 2016, 8). While this creates greater flexibility for leaders to direct aid to the neediest areas of their nations, and gives the receiving nation greater ownership of its own assistance, it also creates a perfect situation for corruption and political protectionism.

### Chapter Conclusion

Reviewing the current literature in light of the secondary research questions has provided the necessary background for understanding the current knowledge available on U.S. and Chinese involvement in West Africa. These sources will be used, along with the methodology to answer the secondary research questions in chapter 4 of the thesis. The next chapter, chapter 3, will provide an explanation of the methodology that will be used

to determine the answers for the secondary research questions, and ultimately the primary research question.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Chapter Introduction

To answer the primary research question, “Does the increase in Chinese influence in West Africa through economic investment pose a risk to U.S. national interests?,” it is necessary to also answer the five secondary research questions. In chapter 2, a literature review was conducted to examine the current body of knowledge structured according to the secondary research questions. This chapter will introduce the research methodology used to assist with those answers.

To answer the secondary research questions, and ultimately the primary research question, each question will be reviewed and answered in turn, to provide a logical flow to the analysis. A set of evaluation criteria was created to assist with analyzing the answers to the questions and provide a scientific basis for answering the primary research question. From this answer, a conclusion and recommendations for further research were made, which is the focus of the final chapter of this thesis.

#### Evaluation Criteria

While the primary research question may seem straightforward, it is necessary to arrive at a more in-depth answer than simply yes or no. Similarly, the secondary research questions are more nuanced, and require a structure to help analyze the response to answer the primary research question. The evaluation criteria and the decision matrix that applies them will provide that structure and allow for the proper analysis. According to U.S. Department of Defense Joint Doctrine, “[d]ecision matrices alone cannot provide

decision solutions. Their greatest value is providing a method to compare COAs (courses of action) against criteria that, when met, produce mission success.” (Department of Defense 2011, IV-37).

The evaluation criteria will determine the extent of risk to U.S. national interests in West Africa. Table 1 depicts the criteria in a matrix that will be applied in the research to determine if each presents “Slight Risk,” “Moderate Risk,” or “Significant Risk” to U.S. national interests in the West African region. The evaluation criteria will be evaluated individually, and their results combined in chapter 4. For each question, an identification of “Slight Risk” will be assigned a value of 1, “Moderate Risk” a 2, and “Significant Risk” a 3. The researcher will assign these values and defend each assignment individually in chapter 4. The aggregate score by combining the total from the four criteria will be applied to answering the primary research question. The definition of the levels of risk are listed below.

#### Slight Risk

For the purpose of the evaluation criteria in this thesis, slight risk is defined as risk whose probability and severity pose little to no direct threat to U.S. national interests. This is due to either a rare probability of their occurrence, the relative weakness in severity should they occur, or a combination of the two.

#### Moderate Risk

For the purpose of the evaluation criteria in this thesis, moderate risk is defined as risk whose probability and severity may pose a direct threat to U.S. national interests.

This is due to a reasonable probability of their occurrence, or the increased severity of their impact should they occur.

### Significant Risk

For the purpose of the evaluation criteria in this thesis, significant risk is defined as risk whose probability and severity will pose a direct threat to U.S. national interests. This is due to an increased probability of their occurrence, or current evidence that the event is already occurring, as well as the damaging severity of their impact on U.S. security, international relations, or economic performance.

Table 1. Research Evaluation Criteria  
Risk to National Interests

Question	Slight Risk	Moderate Risk	Significant Risk
Can China and the U.S. work together in West Africa?			
Does rising Chinese influence decrease U.S. influence?			
Do the U.S. and Chinese Governments view economic aid and investment differently?			
Does Chinese investment in West Africa improve the lives of the population?			

*Source:* Developed by author

The secondary research questions have been used as the model for the questions in the evaluation criteria. By determining the level of risk from the analysis of each question, the resulting data can be applied to determining the overall risk to U.S. national interests, and by extension the answer to the primary research question. This process will be demonstrated in chapter 4.

### Research Methodology

The research in this thesis will follow a step by step approach, with each succeeding step building upon the last. The approach is as follows:

Step 1: The first step is to conduct a literature review of the current body of knowledge on American and Chinese interests and influences in West Africa. This literature review will also answer the first secondary research question, “What are the U.S. national interests in West Africa?” This literature review will be in chapter 2.

Step 2: The second step is to conduct a case study of representative West African nations of the third research question, “Does a rise in Chinese influence necessarily mean a decrease in U.S. influence?” For this case study, the nations of Senegal (a former French colony), Ghana (a former British colony), and Liberia (an independent republic that was never a colony) will be used. By selecting a representative nation of the different historical backgrounds of West Africa, the researcher can gain the greatest insight into whether the analysis of the third research question is accurate across the region, and if there are factors independent of Chinese or American actions that account for their level of influence. This case study analysis will be in chapter 4.

Step 3: The third step is to develop evaluation criteria and a decision matrix to assist with answering the following secondary research questions:

1. Can China and the U.S. work together in the region to their mutual benefit?
2. Does a rise in Chinese influence necessarily mean a decrease in U.S. influence?
3. What is economic aid and investment and do the U.S. and Chinese Governments view it differently?
4. Does Chinese investment in the region improve the lives of the local people or is it merely exploitative?

Step 4: The fourth step is to apply the evaluation criteria and analyze the results.

Combining this information with the answer to the first secondary research question in chapter 2, and the information from the case study of the third secondary research question will answer the primary research question. This analysis and combination of all relevant information will be in chapter 4.

Step 5: The fifth step is to draw conclusions from the research and the answer to the primary research question, and from that to make recommendations for further research and study on this topic.

### Threats to Validity and Biases

Inherent in all research is the threat to the validity of that research, and the biases of the researcher, be they conscious or sub-conscious. For this thesis, the threat is to internal validity, which Professor G. David Garson defines as having to do with defending against sources of bias arising in the research design. Primary amongst these biases for this research is selection bias, which refers to how closely the subjects of the research approach a random sample (Garson 2016). The researcher of this thesis is a naval officer who spent the majority of his early career in the Western Pacific, where Chinese influence is on the rise. The researcher has worked to mitigate the potential for

sub-conscious bias stemming from this experience by utilizing primary sources from both West Africa and China, rather than rely solely on Western writing and points of view. Wherever possible, documents relating to Chinese governmental policy have been accessed directly from Chinese sources, with their own English translations, to mitigate the effects of American or other nations' bias towards China in their translation or presentation.

Another threat to validity is the use of surveys from the Pew Research Group, Gallup, and Afrobarometer in the chapter 4 case study. These surveys ask respondents their opinions regarding the U.S. and China on several issues. It is important to note that opinions regarding the favorability of respondents to the people of China and the U.S. may be far different than their feelings towards the U.S. or Chinese Governments and their policies. The researcher has attempted to mitigate this threat by reviewing the survey details from each service to ensure they attempted to gain a statistically significant result from a representative sample of the population.

### Chapter Conclusion

This chapter sets out the research methodology to be used in answering the primary research question, “Does the rise of Chinese influence in West Africa through economic investment pose a risk to U.S. national interests?” while accounting for validity, bias, and the limitations and delimitations set forth in chapter 1. It identifies the evaluation criteria to be used in analyzing the secondary research questions, as well as the case study format for the third research question. That case study and the analysis of the data from the evaluation criteria will be in the next chapter, chapter 4.



## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

#### Chapter Introduction

This chapter provides the analysis of data to answer the primary research question, “Does the rise in Chinese influence in West Africa through economic investment pose a risk to U.S. national interests?” Chapter 2 presented a literature review to assist in answering the first secondary research question. Chapter 3 provided the research methodology and evaluation criteria that will be applied to the other four secondary research questions and the case study for the third secondary research question. The chapter will follow a logical progression as presented in chapter 3. Following the analysis, the primary research question will be answered at the end of the chapter.

#### Step 1: Results of Literature Review for First Secondary Research Question

In chapter 2, a literature review was conducted to answer the first secondary research question, “What are the U.S. national interests in West Africa?” The primary documents that were reviewed were the 2015 *NSS*, 2012 *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, and the 2016 USAFRICOM Posture Statement. These documents laid out broad United States interests in Africa, with separate regional interests nested within them. There is not an individual document the researcher could find that delineates specific U.S. national interests for West Africa.

#### Step 2: Case Study

Chapter 3 proposed a case study to examine the third secondary research question, “Does a rise in Chinese influence necessarily mean a decrease in U.S. influence?” The

three nations of Senegal, Ghana, and Liberia, will serve as a representative sample of West Africa due to their historical backgrounds and geographic separation across the region. Senegal, as it was formerly a French colony, Ghana because it was a British colony, and Liberia because it never was a colony as it was formed an independent republic.

### Senegal

The case study will first look at Senegal, the former French colony in the northwestern corner of West Africa. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Fact Book, Senegal has been an independent nation since 1960, although its borders have changed several times over the decades. Originally incorporated with French Sudan (present day Mali), their union broke up after only a few months. From 1982-1987 Senegal united with The Gambia as one nation before splitting back into independent countries. Senegal has enjoyed a long history of stability, with peaceful transition of power between governments which have allowed the country to avoid the disastrous coups and civil wars that have engulfed most of the region (Central Intelligence Agency 2017).

This stability has allowed Senegal to both prosper, and serve as a leader in the region, especially amongst the former French colonies who make up the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). This leadership and stability may have its roots in the unique position that colonial Senegal had in French West Africa. According to Dr. Ali B. Ali-Dinar, the French granted Senegal a limited amount of self-representation, which was not accorded to any other colony. This resulted in “a slightly different structure in Senegal where early attempts at assimilation has resulted in the

establishment of four communes or municipalities which had a conseil-general, where assimilated Africans could represent the four municipalities in France” (Ali-Dinar 2017). According to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the U.S. and Senegal have a Bilateral Investment Treaty which was signed in 1983, but do not have a bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). The U.S. does have a TIFA with WAEMU, which Senegal is a member (Office of the U.S. Trade Representative 2014).

Of the three nations in the case study, the U.S. has conducted the least trade and foreign investment with Senegal since 2006. However, there has been a significant increase in the volume of trade between the two countries. In 2006, the U.S. exported \$96.9 million (in U.S. dollars) worth of goods to Senegal, and imported \$20.7 million. By 2016, that figure had grown to \$169.6 million in exports and \$51.3 million in imports (Census Bureau 2016c). Over that same period, foreign direct investment (FDI) between the U.S. and Senegal actually decreased, from \$19 million in stock in 2006 to \$14 million in 2015 (Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2016c).

Over the same period, there has been a significant increase in the favorability rating of the United States in Senegal. According to a 2006 Gallup poll, 66 percent of adults age 15 and older that were surveyed expressed approval of U.S. leadership (Tortora and Mendes 2013). However, a Pew Research Center poll of American favorability ratings in 2015 showed that 80 percent of Senegalese surveys held a favorable view of the United States, despite the decrease in FDI (Wike, Stokes, and Poushter 2015a). This corresponds with a survey conducted by Afrobarometer, an African led research network, which conducted a 36-nation survey of attitudes about China in 2014 and 2015. According to that survey, when asked who the best model for

development was, 33 percent of Senegalese responded in favor of the United States, compared to 28 percent who responded for China (Lekorwe et al. 2016, 5).

China established diplomatic relations with Senegal in 1971, however like most African nations it was not until after the turn of the century that Senegal saw a significant boost in its economic relationship with China. The catalyst was an agreement reached in 2005 which “secured a new economic, political, and diplomatic partnership, thus putting aside past differences over Taiwan...Senegal was granted zero-tariff treatment to export its products to China” (Cisse 2013, 3). This resulted in a significant increase in trade between the two countries, with total trade volume (exports and imports) increasing from \$196.7 million in 2005 to \$845.3 million in 2012 to over \$2.3 billion in 2015 (World Bank 2017). This also led to an even greater wave of investment in Senegal. According to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce, Chinese FDI stock in Senegal rose from \$2.35 million in 2005 to \$45.03 million just five years later. (Ministry of Commerce 2010, 90). This increase in both trade and investment may account for the high favorability rating that China currently enjoys with Senegal. In a Pew Research survey conducted in 2015, 70 percent of Senegalese held a favorable view of China, with only 11 percent responding with an unfavorable view (Wike, Stokes, and Poushter 2015b). This is supported by the Afrobarometer poll, which asked Senegalese if they thought that Chinese economic and political influence in their country was mostly positive, mostly negative, or if they had not heard enough to say. Sixty five percent of Senegalese surveyed responded that they felt Chinese influence was a somewhat or very positive influence on the country (Lekorwe et al. 2016, 15).

## Ghana

Ghana is a nation formed from the merger of two former British possessions, the Gold Coast colony and the trust territory of Togoland. It was the first former colony in sub-Saharan Africa to gain its independence in 1957. Ghana has enjoyed a relatively stable democracy, with six consecutive presidential elections since the approval of a new constitution in 1992. Ghana is also endowed with abundant natural resources, including significant oil reserves which have been discovered off its coast in the Gulf of Guinea. This has prompted an increased level of foreign investment in the country, but the recent drop in oil prices has significantly reduced the nation's oil revenue. The combination of stable government and an economy buoyed by foreign investment has placed Ghana in a position to exert greater influence in the region, especially amongst former British colonies. In this respect, Ghana mirrors Senegal and that nation's leadership of the former French colonies, although there is no unique economic union amongst the former British colonies to match the WAEMU (Central Intelligence Agency 2017). According to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Ghana and the U.S. signed a TIFA in 1999, and began initial talks aimed at a BIT, although negotiations have not progressed beyond simple discussions as of 2016 (Office of the U.S. Trade Representative 2017a).

In contrast to Senegal, Ghana has been the largest trading and investment partner of the U.S. of the three nations in this case study. In 2006, U.S. exports to Ghana totaled \$289.5 million, while imports were \$192.2 million. Ten years later those numbers had climbed to \$783.4 million in exports and \$287.7 million in imports (Census Bureau 2016a). American FDI stock in Ghana dwarfs the totals of Senegal and Liberia, with a total of \$3.1 billion in 2013, the last year that data was available. Ghana also has \$37

million in FDI within the U.S., one of the few West African nations with a reciprocal investment in the U.S. This represents a significant increase from 2006, when American FDI stock in Ghana stood at only \$974 million. (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2016a).

The result of this significant increase in American trade and investment has been improvement of already stellar favorability ratings amongst the Ghanaian people.

According to the Pew Research Global Indicators Database, in 2007 when asked whether they had a favorable or unfavorable view of the U.S., 80 percent of Ghanaians responded with favorable. In 2015, the favorable response to the same question amongst Ghanaians had climbed to 89 percent (Pew Research Center 2016). Afrobarometer numbers further confirm this strong American favorability, in their 2014-2015 survey, 37 percent of Ghanaians responded that they believed the U.S. was the best model for future development, compared to only 15 percent that responded for China (Lekorwe et al. 2016, 5).

This large increase in American trade with Ghana after 2006 pales in comparison with the explosion of trade between Ghana and China. In 2006, total trade between China and Ghana was already strong, standing at \$882.8 million, with \$803.1 million being Chinese imports into Ghana. By 2015, total trade volume had swelled to \$6.6 billion, with \$5.31 billion in Chinese exports to Ghana, compared to \$1.29 billion in Ghanaian exports to China (World Bank 2017). Chinese investment in Ghana experienced significant fluctuation over the same period. In 2005, Chinese FDI stock in Ghana was a mere \$7.33 million, but that figured ballooned to \$404.03 million in just two years. However, the following year it had dropped all the way to \$58.02 million, before seeing

two years of steady improvement to stand at \$202 million in 2010 (Ministry of Commerce 2010, 90).

These significant increases in both trade and investment since 2005 have also lead to an improvement in China's favorability score amongst the Ghanaian people. In 2007, the Pew Research Center survey found that 75 percent of Ghanaians surveyed held a favorable view of China, which had increased to 80 percent in 2015 (Pew Research Center 2016). However, the reaction to the rise in Chinese-Ghanaian trade, especially with Chinese imports, has not been entirely positive. The 2014-2015 Afrobarometer survey asked African citizens in 36 nations whether they thought Chinese economic and political influence in their country was mostly positive, mostly negative, or if they had not heard enough to say. Thirty six percent of Ghanaians responded with it was a somewhat or very negative influence, compared to 34 percent whose said it was somewhat or very positive, the second lowest favorability of the 36 nations polled. The same survey also asked citizens if they believed Chinese economic assistance did a good job or bad job of meeting their country's needs. Forty one percent of Ghanaians responded that it did a somewhat or very bad job, compared with 30 percent who responded with a somewhat or very good job (Lekorwe et al. 2016, 15).

### Liberia

Liberia has a unique history in not only West Africa but also sub-Saharan African in that it was never a colony of a European power. The area that is today's Liberia served as a settlement for freed American slaves in the early 1800's, until the nation of Liberia was founded as an independent republic in 1847. While never an official colony, many European nations viewed Liberia as a de facto colony of the U.S., which may explain

why none tried to claim it during the famed “Scramble for Africa”. Columnist Martin Woollacott of *The Guardian* echoes this belief by stating “[a]lthough the U.S. stands in essentially similar relationship to Liberia as Britain does to Sierra Leone, and more distantly, as France does to its former colonies in west Africa, it has consistently avoided the duties implicit in that relationship” (Woollacott 2003). Despite solid progress in economic and social development after World War II, a military coup against the ruling party descended from the original freed American slaves, and devastating civil war left much of the country’s economy, infrastructure, and social cohesion shattered when peace was finally declared in 2003 (Central Intelligence Agency 2017). The return of stable government has allowed the nation to work on bringing back foreign investment and aid to repair the damage. According to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, Liberia and the U.S. signed a TIFA in 2007; although as of 2016 there have been no discussions towards a BIT between the two nations (Office of the U.S. Trade Representative 2016b).

The resumption of peace in Liberia corresponded to a significant boost in trade with the U.S., which in the final year of the civil war in 2002 stood at \$75.3 million. In 2006 total trade volume between the two nations was \$207.7 million, with \$139.9 million being in Liberian exports to the U.S. Ten years later that trade volume has increased slightly to \$240.6 million, but now \$176.5 million was in U.S. exports to Liberia (Census Bureau 2016b). The U.S. also increased its FDI in Liberia over that period from \$556 million in stock in 2006 to \$929 million in stock in 2015, the final year for which data is available (Bureau of Economic Analysis 2016b).

Due to the historic ties with the U.S. dating back to the nation’s founding, Liberians may be assumed to have a natural favorability toward Americans. In the 2014-



2015 Afrobarometer survey, when asked which country would be the best model for future development, Liberians overwhelmingly chose the U.S., with 67 percent of respondents. That was the highest of all 36 nations surveyed, and 15 percent higher than any other nation that responded in favor of the U.S. (Lekorwe et al. 2016, 5). However, that is one of the only surveys available to gauge Liberian attitudes towards the United States, as the Pew Research Center has not surveyed Liberians in any of its Global Attitudes Surveys in the last decade. Gallup has published just three polls including Liberia, but they centered on the opinion of U.S. leadership, which can be different from attitudes towards nations as a whole. In 2007, Liberians polled by Gallup held a 35 percent approval rating of American leadership, compared to a 12 percent disapproval. The majority of respondents, 53 percent, held no opinion on U.S. leadership either way (Ray 2008). Following the election of Barak Obama in 2009, U.S. leadership approval in Liberia saw a dramatic spike in 2010, only to drop back substantially in 2011. Gallup reported that Liberians held a 90 percent approval of U.S. leadership in 2010, but that decreased to 65 percent in 2011 (Ray 2012). However, these polls were focused on approval of American leadership rather than favorability towards the nation as a whole. In 2007, Pew Research conducted their own survey in Ghana, where the U.S. received an 80 percent favorability rating as a whole, however U.S. leadership, specifically the President, received only a 69 percent approval from the same respondents, which nearly matches the 70 percent result from the Gallup poll (Ray 2008, Pew Research Center 2016).

China and Liberia have enjoyed a significant relationship since the turn of this century, marked by increasing levels of trade and investment. According to the China

Commerce Yearbook, China and Liberia have a trade and economic cooperation agreement with each other similar to the TIFA the U.S. has with Liberia; although they have not yet ratified a bilateral investment protection agreement similar to the BIT (Ministry of Commerce 2016). At the turn of the century, China and Liberia already had a significant trade relationship, with total trade volume between the nations reaching \$161.3 million. As the Chinese economy took off, that trade volume also increased, reaching a total volume of \$531.7 million in 2006. This trend has continued, as total trade reached \$1.54 billion in 2015. However, like the other two countries in this case study, the trade is heavily weighted in China's favor, with \$1.36 billion of 2015 trade accounted for by Chinese exports to Liberia (World Bank 2017).

Chinese investment in Liberia has also followed the same up-and-down pattern as seen in Ghana, although it also is on an upward trend. In 2005, Chinese FDI stock in Liberia was \$15.95 million, the most of any of the three case study nations. Just two years later, prior to the global financial crisis that figure had almost disappeared to \$150,000. However, there followed three consecutive years of increased investment that resulted in FDI stock reaching \$81.67 million in 2010 (Ministry of Commerce 2011, 90).

Liberian opinions about China are limited by the same lack of survey data that was found for opinions on the U.S.. The most in-depth survey of Liberian opinions over the last several years remains the 2014-2015 Afrobarometer survey, which did ask several questions pertaining to China. Its data revealed that Liberians largely welcomed the increased trade and investment from China. When asked how they felt about Chinese economic and political influence in their country, 81 percent of Liberians responded that it was a somewhat or very positive influence, compared to only 7 percent who responded

somewhat or very negative. The 81 percent represented the third largest positive response by any of the 36 nations in the survey (Lekorwe et al. 2016, 15). Similarly, 68 percent of Liberians believed that Chinese economic development assistance did a somewhat or very good job of meeting their country's needs, compared to only 20 percent who said a somewhat or very poor job (Lekorwe et al. 2016, 17).

### Conclusion

The case study looked at three West African nations: Ghana, Liberia, and Senegal, in relation to the third secondary research question "Does a rise in Chinese influence necessarily mean a decrease in U.S. influence?" All three nations have received a significant increase in both total trade volume and FDI stock with China since the turn of the century, and especially since 2005. All three of these nations have also received increased FDI stock and total trade volume with the U.S. over the same period; although as shown, the volume of trade is dwarfed by that of China. All three nations now enjoy trade volumes over \$1 billion with China as of 2015, yet none of them has reached that level with the U.S. as of 2016. However, as has been shown by survey data from the Pew Research Center, Gallup, and Afrobarometer, both the U.S. and China enjoy very high favorability opinions from Ghanaians, Liberians, and the Senegalese, with no appreciable decrease from either the U.S. or China in response to an increase by the other. Therefore, based on the evidence provided by the case study, the answer to the third secondary research question is no, a rise in Chinese influence does not necessarily mean a decrease in U.S. influence.

### Step 3: Develop Evaluation Criteria and a Decision Matrix

The third step in the research methodology is to develop evaluation criteria and a decision matrix to assist with answering the four remaining secondary research questions after the first secondary research question was answered in the literature review. This was accomplished in chapter 3, with the decision matrix and evaluation criteria listed in table 1.

### Step 4: Application of the Evaluation Criteria

The fourth step of the research methodology is to apply the evaluation criteria in the decision matrix to each of the four remaining secondary research questions. As stated in chapter 3, each question upon evaluation will be given a numerical score appropriate to its individual level of risk. The judgement of the researcher in assigning the score to each question will be defended individually, and the total aggregate of the evaluated questions will be the basis to answering the primary research question.

### Levels of Risk

The evaluation criteria assign levels of risk to each secondary research question against which they are applied. Department of Defense Joint Publication 1-02 defines risk as “the probability and severity of loss linked to hazards” (Department of Defense 2013, 236). The definitions of risk for the purposes of this thesis are listed below to assist with the understanding of the methodology.

#### Slight Risk

For the purpose of the evaluation criteria in this thesis, slight risk is defined as risk whose probability and severity pose little to no direct threat to U.S. national interests.

This is due to either a rare probability of their occurrence, the relative weakness in severity should they occur, or a combination of the two.

### Moderate Risk

For the purpose of the evaluation criteria in this thesis, moderate risk is defined as risk whose probability and severity may pose a direct threat to U.S. national interests.

This is due to a reasonable probability of their occurrence, or the increased severity of their impact should they occur.

### Significant Risk

For the purpose of the evaluation criteria in this thesis, significant risk is defined as risk whose probability and severity will pose a direct threat to U.S. national interests.

This is due to an increased probability of their occurrence, or current evidence that the event is already occurring, as well as the damaging severity of their impact on U.S. security, international relations, or economic performance.

## Application

Remembering the definitions of risk listed above, a numerical score will be assigned by the evaluation criteria to each level of risk: slight (1), moderate (2), and significant (3). Upon completion of the evaluation, the scores will be added to assist with determining the overall level of risk to U.S. national interests. This score, along with the answers to the secondary research questions will assist with determining the answer to the primary research question at the end of this chapter. Each of the evaluation criteria, based on the secondary research questions, will be scored and explained individually.

Table 2. Research Evaluation Criteria  
Chinese and American Cooperation

Question	Slight Risk	Moderate Risk	Significant Risk
Can China and the U.S. work together in West Africa?	X		

Source: Developed by author.

Evaluation Criteria 1: Can China and the U.S. work together in West Africa? As stated in the literature review, there are areas of overlap in U.S. and Chinese policy towards West Africa. Both the *NSS* and *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* specifically mention economic growth, investment, and trade as major U.S. interest not just in West Africa, but across the globe. China has shown a willingness to increase both its trade and investment with West Africa, with substantial increases in both since the turn of the century. Working together with China will not only serve to further advance the economic development, infrastructure improvement, and security environment of West Africa, but can do so at slight risk to U.S. national interests.

Table 3. Research Evaluation Criteria  
Impact of rising Chinese influence

Question	Slight Risk	Moderate Risk	Significant Risk
Does rising Chinese influence decrease U.S. influence?	X		

Source: Developed by author.

Evaluation Criteria 2: Does rising Chinese influence decrease U.S. influence? As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, a representative case study of the nations of West Africa showed that an increase in Chinese influence, even over the space of a decade, had no appreciable impact on American influence, or the perception of the U.S. by the local populations. Thus, a rise in Chinese influence does not pose an identified risk to U.S. influence and per the earlier definition will be scored as a slight risk.

Table 4. Research Evaluation Criteria  
Difference in Economic Aid

Question	Slight Risk	Moderate Risk	Significant Risk
Do the U.S. and Chinese Governments view economic aid and investment differently?		X	

*Source:* Developed by author.

Evaluation Criteria 3: Do the U.S. and Chinese Governments view economic aid and investment differently? There is a significant difference in the view of economic aid between not just the U.S., but also other Western nations that are part of the OECD, and China. The U.S. and OECD have shifted economic aid over the last several decades toward programs aimed at alleviating poverty and human suffering. China, as a developing nation herself, has used her own experience with foreign aid to shape her economic assistance to West Africa. Rather than a focus on poverty reduction, China uses economic assistance to support Chinese industries either through receiving raw materials

as repayment for loans or by using assistance to export goods, technology, and Chinese experts overseas. This fundamental difference can lead to the U.S. and China having important disagreements over aid policy, and is therefore rated as a moderate risk.

Table 5. Research Evaluation Criteria  
Is Chinese Investment Exploitive

Question	Slight Risk	Moderate Risk	Significant Risk
Does Chinese investment in West Africa improve the lives of the population?		X	

*Source:* Developed by author

Evaluation Criteria 4: Does Chinese investment in West Africa improve the lives of the population? As shown in the literature review, China has invested significant amounts in improving infrastructure in West Africa, as well as working to improve the security situation to better protect Chinese companies and investments. However, as shown in the case study, there are concerns amongst the local populations relating to the quality of goods received from China. The people of Ghana responded strongly over concerns of Chinese companies exploiting Ghanaian land and resources, which may begin to grown in other nations in the region as well. If Chinese investments are not directly improving economic or quality of life conditions for local populations, then they are in conflict with the U.S Government's stated objectives of addressing constraints to growth and promoting poverty reduction (Obama 2012, 6).



### Answer to the Primary Research Question

Having applied the evaluation criteria, the final process of Step 4 is to aggregate the results and present them in a single table. The total aggregate is then used to answer the primary research question of this thesis.

Table 6. Response Evaluation Criteria  
Final Aggregation

Question	Slight Risk (1 point)	Moderate Risk (2 points)	Significant Risk (3 points)
Can China and the U.S. work together in West Africa?	X		
Does rising Chinese influence decrease U.S. influence?	X		
Do the U.S. and Chinese Governments view economic aid and investment differently?		X	
Does Chinese investment in West Africa improve the lives of the population?		X	
TOTAL	2	4	0

*Source:* Developed by author

The aggregation of the evaluation criteria demonstrates that the rise of Chinese influence in West Africa through economic investment does pose a moderate risk to U.S. national interests. While there is slight to no risk posed by cooperating with the Chinese in West Africa, or the rise in Chinese influence in the vacuum of opinion polls, the

methods by which China is investing in West Africa and the affect that has on local governments and population does pose a risk to the stated U.S. interests in sub-Saharan Africa and across the globe as set forth in the *NSS* and the *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*.

#### Step 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The final step in the research methodology is to draw conclusions from the research and make recommendations to policy makers and future researchers. These conclusions and recommendations will be found in the following chapter, chapter 5.

#### Chapter Conclusion

Does the rise of Chinese influence in West Africa through economic investment pose a risk to U.S. national interests? This thesis has shown that the answer to that question is yes, there is a moderate risk to U.S. national interests in the process by which China is advancing its influence and economic goals in West Africa. However, the literature review, and case study have also shown areas of opportunity for America. The further discussion of these risks and opportunities is the subject of the conclusions and recommendations of the final chapter, chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Chapter Introduction

As the analysis in chapter 4 has shown, the answer to the primary research question, “Does the rise in Chinese influence in West Africa through economic investment pose a risk to U.S. national interests?” is yes, there is a moderate risk to U.S. national interests in the process by which China is advancing its influence and economic goals in West Africa. However, it is important to note that two of the four secondary research questions to which the evaluation criteria were applied were rated at slight or no risk. This shows that there is a level of nuance in the answer to the primary research question that must be taken into account, and will be further discussed in the Conclusions section below.

#### Conclusion

This thesis determined that there was a moderate risk to U.S. national interests by the rise of Chinese influence in West Africa, specifically by the process which China is advancing its economic goals. The literature review in chapter 2 outlined U.S. national interests, and the application of the evaluation criteria in chapter 4 determined the answer to the primary research question. However, in the application of the evaluation criteria it was determined that there was slight or no risk to U.S. national interests from working together with the Chinese in West Africa. There was also slight to no risk of increasing Chinese influence in the region causing a corresponding decrease in U.S. influence. Thus, while the methods by which China is investing in West Africa, and the trade deals it

secures with the governments of the region do pose a moderate risk, the U.S. can find ways to work with the Chinese in West Africa. As China is primarily interested in securing natural resources, exporting Chinese equipment and technology abroad, and assuring itself of international recognition of the “One China Policy,” all three of these interests require stable, secure governments within the nations of West Africa. With an ever increasing amount of FDI from Chinese companies in the region, and a growing number of expatriate Chinese citizens living in West Africa, China begins to have as much to lose, if not more, from military coups and political instability as any Western nation. As good governance and the strengthening of democratic institutions are two of the key U.S. national interests around the globe, the U.S. should focus on working with the Chinese Government to advance these interests to their mutual benefit. The literature review in chapter 2 demonstrated that China is focusing its foreign aid on infrastructure development to assist in gaining access to the natural resources of West Africa, while the U.S. and most Western nations focus their aid on poverty reduction and health care support. This represents another area where the U.S. and China could work together to combine their efforts for a multi-layered approach to aid in West Africa. Expansion of infrastructure can assist with local economic growth, assisting governmental stability. It will also enable greater access for aid organizations to rural and inland populations, and improved access for those populations to medical care from regional clinics and hospitals. Improved infrastructure can also assist with a more rapid response to natural disasters and pandemic disease outbreaks, such as the Ebola crisis in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea.

The conclusion of this thesis is based on the national interests of the U.S. as set forth in documents that were prepared by the previous presidential administration, and by data collected, and policies conducted during the administrations of both Presidents Bush and Obama. There have also been changes to the presidency and premiership of the People's Republic of China during the focus of this research, and the resulting change in levels of aid, investment, and focus on the West African region. With the introduction of a new presidential administration in the U.S., changes in policy and the strategic interests of the U.S. could have significant impacts on this conclusion, and the ability of the U.S. and China to interact in West Africa.

### Recommendations

Based on the research conducted for this thesis, and the conclusion reached, the following sections will provide recommendations to decision makers in the U.S. as well as future researchers around the world based on the opinions of the researcher.

#### Recommendations to Decision Makers

During the course of this research, it was abundantly clear that the USG does not have a distinct national strategy towards the region of West Africa. In fact, a review of Department of State documents found that there were strategies only for sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, although that was combined with the strategy for the Middle East. Based on the complex makeup of religious, ethnic, and colonial ties that exist throughout the continent, simply having one strategy for all sub-Saharan Africa is insufficient. There should be a separate strategy for West Africa that recognizes the

unique challenges and opportunities present there, and aids in focusing U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military efforts in the region to greater effect.

As stated above in the conclusion, the U.S. should find common ground to work with the Chinese Government to enhance the impact of their aid to West Africa. As U.S. aid is more targeted towards health and education, as evidenced in the literature review, and Chinese aid is more focused on infrastructure development, there is an opportunity to combine efforts towards greater impact. As China grows more into the role of global economic power, finding areas of cooperation rather than conflict will be increasingly important to building constructive and peaceful ties between our nations. This joint venture will also bring the ability to deliver greater benefits to the populations of West Africa through increased economic development, better education, and enhanced security, all of which will strengthen the democratic governments now formed throughout the region. Ensuring the continued effectiveness of these governments in responding to their people's needs and peacefully transferring power between administrations is in the best interests of not only the U.S. and China, but all the people of West Africa.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

As stated in chapter 1, the researcher of this thesis was unable to conduct research on the ground in West Africa, and gain firsthand accounts from the local population. The Afrobarometer surveys referenced in chapter 2 and 4 have begun to assist with this, but there is still a significant opportunity to gauge the impact of U.S. and Chinese investment on West Africa from the recipient populations. A more focused study on economic impact from their perspective, rather than filtered through government or corporate

spokespeople would aid in bringing greater attention to where improvements can be made and cooperation can take place.

The researcher of this thesis, whose academic background is in history, approached this topic from a strategic study focus on the interplay between the U.S. and China in West Africa. A more detailed study from a researcher whose academic background is in economics would allow for greater insight into the complex world of FDI and ODA, and how they are working or working to improve conditions in West Africa. Are the U.S. and Chinese getting the return on investment from their corporations that encourages greater FDI in the future? Are these investments going towards sustainable economic models, or are they quick “cash grabs” that will cause more harm than good for the nations that are receiving them? Is ODA from the U.S. having a measurable impact in West Africa, and if not how can it be adjusted to better meet local needs?

### Final Thoughts

The era of America as the world’s preeminent economic and military superpower may be coming to an end, if it has not already. How we as a nation accept this reality and find ways to cooperate with the emerging power of China will help define the narrative of the twenty-first century. Assisting with the development of West Africa, supporting their, in many cases, newly stable and peaceful governments will also decide whether the region can place the tumultuous end of the twentieth century behind them and move toward a better future. We cannot aid in achieving that goal alone, and finding areas of cooperation there with China could be a crucial step in ensuring peaceful ties between our nations. Let us learn our lessons from the past and not use Africa as a place to fight over

for empire, but a continent of varied regions where we can cooperate for everyone's benefit.



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